

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 188

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USINT HAVANA
USUN NEW YORK 3019

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 10477

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: INTERVIEW WITH MUGABE

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

SUMMARY: IN LENGTHY INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE
PUNCH, AUGUST 22, ROBERT MUGABE DISCUSSED HIS
REQUEST FOR MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING
DURING A RECENT MEETING WITH CASTRO IN HAVANA,
HIS VIEWS ON ALL-PARTIES MEETING, HIS
ASSESSMENT OF WAR INSIDE ZIMBABWE AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF HIS ARMY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CENTERFOLD SPREAD, THE PUNCH OF AUGUST 22
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CARRIED A LENGTHY BYLINED INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT
MUGABE BY POLITICAL EDITOR NDUKA ONUM. THE
INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE IN MUGABE'S HEADQUARTERS
IN MAPUTO AFTER HE HAD RETURNED FROM THE
ELEVENTH YOUTH FESTIVAL IN HAVANA. ACCORDING
TO MUGABE, THE VISIT, WHICH WAS AT THE
INVITATION OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT, WAS HIS FIRST

TO CUBA. IT WAS ALSO HIS FIRST MEETING WITH CASTRO. SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERVIEW FOLLOW AND THE FULL TEXT IS BEING POUCHED.

2. THE SUBSTANCE OF MUGABE'S MEETING WITH CASTRO WAS A DISCUSSION OF THE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE CUBA COULD GIVE TO HELP ZANU AND ZANLA QUICKLY ESCALATE THEIR "STRUGGLE." MUGABE IS QUOTED AS SAYING: "WE HAVE ASKED FOR MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, THIS IS, ASSISTANCE BY WAY OF ARMS, BY WAY OF MILITARY TRAINING FACILITIES. AND CUBA IS ACCORDING OUR COUNTERPARTS IN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT MILITARY TRAINING. SO WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO EXTEND SIMILAR FACILITIES TO US. THEY HAVEN'T SAID NO. BUT THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER." IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "BUT YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T SEE CUBAN SOLDIERS MARCHING ALONGSIDE ZANLA INTO ZIMBABWE?" MUGABE ANSWERED: "NO, NO, NO, I DON'T SEE THEM COME INTO OUR SITUATION. WE ARE DEALING WITH THE SITUATION QUITE SUCCESSFULLY. WE ARE VERY EFFECTIVE IN OUR OPERATIONS. AND THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD ASK FOR MANPOWER, THAT IS FOR MILITARY UNITS TO COME FROM ANY GOVERNMENT, NO MATTER HOW FRIENDLY THAT GOVERNMENT IS. BUT CERTAINLY WE NEED ARMS, WE NEED TRAINING FACILITIES. OUR FRIENDS AND

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ALLIES ARE DUTY BOUND TO COME TO OUR ASSISTANCE IN THOSE FIELDS."

3. IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "THE DECISION TO GO TO CUBA, IS IT A NEW DIMENSION TO THE POLITICS OF ZANU?", MUGABE SAID: "IT IS NOT A NEW DIMENSION AT ALL. WE HOLD OURSELVES AS FRIENDS OF ALL RACES AND COUNTRIES THE WORLD ALL OVER. THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT UNDERTAKEN A TRIP TO CUBA SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS AMOUNTING TO OUR COLD-SHOULDERING CUBA. IN FACT IN THE SIXTIES WE DID TRAIN SOME OF OUR CADRES IN CUBA. SO THAT MY GOING THERE DOES NOT MARK A FIRST STEP IN ESTABLISHING FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH CUBA. I WENT TO CUBA UNDER INVITATION. PREVIOUSLY THEY HAD NOT INVITED US, OF COURSE. BUT ON THIS OCCASION THEY INVITED ZANU, AND ME IN PARTICULAR, AS A GUEST OF HONOR ALONGSIDE OTHER GUESTS OF HONOR WHICH INCLUDED LEADERS OF OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS-- COMRADE NKOMO HIMSELF WAS PRESENT, OLIVER TAMBO WAS PRESENT. NUJOMA WAS UNFORTUNATELY UNABLE TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF THE DEBATE AT THE SECURITY

COUNCIL IN NAMIBIA....WE WANT FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL
SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, IN FACT, WITH ALL PROGRESSIVE
COUNTRIES. AND IF MOSCOW AND CUBA WILL
RECIPROCATATE, WE WILL ESTABLISH VERY FIRM
FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THEM."

4. ON THE SUBJECT OF AN ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE,
MUGABE SAID "....IT IS A BRITISH PROBLEM FOR THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE INTERNAL PARTIES TO COME
TOGETHER. BUT OF COURSE THIS IS OBJECTIONABLE
BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT TO GET MARRIED TO THE
INTERNAL GROUP. WE WOULD LIKE TO NEGOTIATE WITH
THE BRITISH WHO ARE THE COLONIAL POWER AND WHO ARE
CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO DECOLONISE
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OUR COUNTRY AND TO A SETTLEMENT. IT IS NOT A
PROBLEM OF SETTLING BETWEEN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT
AND THE SMITH/SITHOLE/MUZOREWA/CHIRAU GROUP. NO,
OURS IS A PURELY COLONIAL QUESTION."

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5. WHEN ASKED TO ASSESS "THE WAR ON THE GROUND INSIDE ZIMBABWE," MUGABE SAID "WE OPERATE ROUGHLY IN AN AREA WHICH IS ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL AREA IN THE COUNTRY. AS YOU KNOW, WE ARE OPERATING WITHIN VICINITY OF TOWNS LIKE SALISBURY, UMTALI AND OTHERS. AND WITHIN THESE AREAS WE HAVE CREATED CERTAIN LIBERATED ZONES WHICH THE ENEMY FEARS TO TREAD NOW. WE ARE FAST TURNING THESE INTO FULLY OPERATIONAL BASE AREAS--WITH THE POPULATION UNDERTAKING SELF-RELIANCE PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE AND THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SO ON. WE HAVE CERTAIN OTHER AREAS WHICH ARE CONTESTED AREAS, AND OF COURSE, WE ARE YET STILL TRYING TO MOP UP THE ENEMY, AND THESE OTHER, MAYBE AREAS AROUND THE TOWNS WHICH ARE STILL CONTESTED. BUT I MUST SAY THAT OVERALL WE ARE IN CONTROL OF

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THE RURAL AREAS."

6. IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "HOW IS THE MOVEMENT GROWING TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONVENTIONAL ARMY?", MUGABE SAID: "WELL THAT IS OBVIOUSLY THE LOGICAL DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS. FROM ORDINARY GUERRILLA WARFARE YOU MOVE TO MOBILE WARFARE UNTIL YOU EVENTUALLY END UP WITH CONVENTIONAL WARFARE. WE ARE NOT JUST LITTLE GROUPS OF INFILTRATORS. WE ARE AN ARMY. A BIG ARMY WHICH IS WELL ORGANIZED WITH A HIGH COMMAND AT THE TOP, DESCENDING DOWN TO THE PROVINCIAL COMMAND, SECTORAL COMMANDS AND DOWN BELOW, WE HAVE OUR SECTIONAL COMMANDERS, SECTIONAL LEADERS. SO THE PATTERN IS THE SAME AS YOU GET ELSEWHERE--THE MODERN PATTERN OF ORGANIZING THE ARMY. BUT THE WARFARE IS DIFFERENT. WE DO NOT UNDERTAKE THE CONVENTIONAL WARFARE FOR OBVIOUS REASONS. WE DO NOT HAVE AS EFFECTIVE EQUIPMENT AS THE ENEMY; ALTHOUGH FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POPULATION AND MANPOWER WE MAY HAVE AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE ENEMY. AND SO WE ARE FORCED TO FIGHT A GUERRILLA STRUGGLE. THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE BEEN AND WE HAVE PROVED TO BE VERY EFFECTIVE IN ZIMBABWE. BUT WE HAVE ALSO DEVELOPED BEYOND THAT. WE HAVE COME TO THE STAGE OF MOBILE WARFARE. WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN QUOTE A NUMBER OF OPERATIONS ON A MOBILE PATTERN AIMED AT SELECTED TARGETS WHICH SMALLER GUERRILLA UNITS CANNOT HIT EFFECTIVELY. AND FOR THESE WE HAVE MOBILISED, DEPLOYED AS

MANY AS TWO HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,
FIVE HUNDRED CADRES, FIGHTERS FOR THEM. WE
THEREFORE REGARD THE STAGE WHICH WE ARE CURRENTLY
IN THAT OF MOBILE WARFARE AND WE ARE DEVELOPING
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INTO CONVENTIONAL WARFARE. IT IS A LOGICAL
SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT OF OUR STRUGGLE. BUT OF
COURSE, SUCCESS IN MOVING FROM ONE STAGE TO THE
OTHER DEPENDS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF ARMS AND
FACILITIES FOR TRAINING. AND THIS IS WHY WE
HAVE BEEN APPEALING TO THE OAU FOR SUPPORT. WE
NEED TO PRODUCE MANY MORE MEN THAN WE ARE
CURRENTLY PRODUCING. WE NEED LOTS OF WEAPONS...BUT
JUST NOW ONLY FEW STATES DO GIVE EFFECTIVE
ASSISTANCE TO US." END UNCLASSIFIED.

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7. COMMENT: MUGABE APPARENTLY IS SHOPPING
AROUND FOR ARMS AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE (SEE REFTTEL).
ALTHOUGH WE STILL DO NOT KNOW THE SUBSTANCE OF
MUGABE'S MEETING WITH OBASANAJO IN LAGOS OVER THE
WEEKEND OR THE REASON FOR GABA'S SUDDEN TRIP WITH
MUGABE TO LUSAKA AND MAPUTO, THE PF'S PLANS TO
ESCALATE THEIR ACTIVITIES MAY WELL HAVE BEEN
ONE OF THE MAJOR SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.
WYMAN

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